

*I looked out the door of the dining hall and saw a flash of lightning streak through the sky. "How on earth am I going to get back to my dorm room in this storm," I thought. As panic crossed my face, a friend of mine looked down at me and asked, "Do you not like to get wet or something?" I looked at him dumbfounded. The danger of being struck by lightning had never even crossed his mind. At that moment, I decided this had to change; and I was going to take action to see that it did.*

My personal lightning safety campaign began long before last year when I chose "When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors – Promoting Lightning Awareness" as my platform for the Miss Ohio Scholarship Pageant. I became an advocate for lightning safety when I was 11-years-old and my oldest sister, Christina, was struck by lightning while working on a golf course. Christina, who was 17-years-old at the time, was left with severe and permanent injuries as a result of the lightning strike. Since the day Christina was struck, it has been my mission to teach others about lightning.

Over the past year, I have talked in person to over 1,200 students and 100 businesses about lightning. I have attended meetings held by the local Rotary, the Shriner's Club, and the Safety Council Organization. Through radio and television interviews, I've been able to target an even broader audience and tell thousands of people about the consequences lightning can bring.

Lightning is a danger that threatens every single person; anyone can be struck by lightning. Christina is the biggest inspiration in my life, but I never want anyone else to endure the challenges and struggles she has faced as a result of being struck by lightning. It only takes one instance of someone being in the wrong place at the wrong time during a storm for them to be struck. Lightning can affect you or someone you love. Please, be smart in a thunderstorm, and always remember: when thunder roars, go indoors.

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